

## National Family Caregiver Support Program Resources

### Consumer Direction: Home and Community Based Services



### What Are Consumer-Directed Services?

Consumer-directed services are a way of thinking about and providing services that assumes caregivers have the right and ability to determine what they need, how their needs will be met and by whom, as well as, judge the quality of the services they receive. A growing trend in long-term services is to provide a system that gives caregivers not only the ability to choose and manage the services they receive but also the ability to hire family, friends, or neighbors to provide some of the services, such as meal preparation or personal care.

### What Are Some Characteristics Of Consumer-Directed Care?

Self-directed care is often referred to as consumer direction and includes services provided in your home or in the community. Caregivers and care receivers direct the care by:

- Participating in assessing their own needs
- Determining how needs will be met
- Determining who will provide services
- Defining the job description/tasks of the worker
- Deeming the competency of the worker, and
- Monitoring the quality of the service.



### What Are The Advantages Of Consumer-Directed Services?

There are a number of advantages of consumer-directed care including better control, cost effectiveness and flexibility.

- **Increased control over the quality and types of services received.**

Sometimes caregivers and other consumers are not happy with the quality of the services they receive. If there have been problems with workers not showing up on time, or not being available when needed, or restrictions from an agency on what workers can do, a consumer-directed program may provide you with the control to better manage your needs.

- **Better value for the services received.**

You may be able to receive more services for the same amount of money, since you can comparison shop for services and negotiate the rate of pay for workers.

- **Greater flexibility.**

A consumer-directed program may provide the flexibility to hire a family, friend or neighbor that traditional care services cannot. This may be especially useful if you live in a rural area. There are fewer service providers and home care agencies in rural areas often have a difficult time recruiting staff, since workers might be required to drive long distances to get to some homes. A consumer-directed program may be very effective because you may be able to hire someone who lives nearby to meet some of your needs.

## What Role Do I Play?

Consumer-directed services may not be for everyone. While consumer-directed services may offer more choices, greater control and increased flexibility these benefits come with responsibilities.

This is especially true if you choose to hire family and friends to provide some of the services you need. You are considered the employer and persons that you hire are considered your employees. Your responsibilities include managing payroll, and any applicable employment taxes and insurance. Some consumer-directed programs have an organization that provides an array of fiscal services to handle some of the employer-related responsibilities on your behalf.



## Will Consumer-Directed Services Replace The Traditional Service Delivery System?

Consumer-directed services are a growing trend and therefore are becoming available in more and more places. However, most older persons prefer a traditional service delivery system to provide the help they need. In traditional services, a social service professional determines your needs and arranges for services. The responsibilities that are part of consumer-directed care can be burdensome. Therefore, consumer-directed services are likely to remain an option. You, as a consumer, will be able to choose whether the traditional service delivery system, or consumer-directed services, best meets your needs.

## How Do I Find Out More About Consumer-Directed Services?

For more information about consumer-directed services, visit the web site [www.consumerdirection.org](http://www.consumerdirection.org).

An excellent resource regarding consumer direction for older adults is CONSUMER CHOICE NEWS, a publication of the National Association of State Units on Aging and the National Council on the Aging. The publication is supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. For more information, go to [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org).

*Information provided in this fact sheet was adapted from materials submitted by the Georgia Division of Aging Services, Atlanta, GA.*

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

AoA recognizes the importance of making information readily available to consumers, professionals, researchers, and students. Our website provides information for and about older persons, their families, and professionals involved in aging programs and services. For more information about AoA, please contact: US Dept of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, Washington, DC 20201; phone: (202) 401-4541; fax (202) 357-3560; Email: [aoainfo@aoa.gov](mailto:aoainfo@aoa.gov); or contact our website at: [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)